

COUNTRY DATA: SIERRA LEON : Information from the CIA World Factbook

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is slowly being reestablished after the civil war from 1991 to 2002 that resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people (about one-third of the population). The military, which took over full responsibility for security following the departure of UN peacekeepers at the end of 2005, is increasingly developing as a guarantor of the country's stability. The armed forces remained on the sideline during the 2007 presidential election, but still look to the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) - a civilian UN mission - to support efforts to consolidate peace. The new government's priorities include furthering development, creating jobs, and stamping out endemic corruption.

GEOGRAPHY

Location	Western Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Guinea and Liberia
Area	71,740 sq km
Climate	tropical; hot, humid; summer rainy season (May to December); winter dry season (December to April)
Natural Resources	diamonds, titanium ore, bauxite, iron ore, gold, chromite
Total Renewable Water Resources	160 cu km (1987)
Freshwater Withdrawal	0.38 cu km/yr (domestic 5%/ industrial 3%/ agricultural 92%)
Natural Hazards	dry, sand-laden harmattan winds blow from the Sahara (December to February); sandstorms, dust storms
Environmental Issues	rapid population growth pressuring the environment; overharvesting of timber, expansion of cattle grazing, and slash-and-burn agriculture have resulted in deforestation and soil exhaustion; civil war depleted natural resources; overfishing

PEOPLE

Population	5,245,695 (July 2010 est.)
Ethnic Groups	Temne 35%, Mende 31%, Limba 8%, Kono 5%, Krio 2% (descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area in the late-18th century; also known as Krio), Mandingo 2%, Loko 2%, other 15% (includes refugees from Liberia's recent civil war, and small numbers of Europeans, Lebanese, Pakistanis, and Indians) (2008 census)
Religions	Muslim 60%, Christian 10%, indigenous beliefs 30%

Languages	English (official, regular use limited to literate minority), Mende (principal vernacular in the south), Temne (principal vernacular in the north), Krio (English-based Creole, spoken by the descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area, a lingua franca and a first language for 10% of the population but understood by 95%)
Literacy Rate	definition: age 15 and over can read and write English, Mende, Temne, or Arabic total population: 35.1% male: 46.9%; female: 24.4% (2004 est.)
Major Infectious Diseases	degree of risk: very high food or waterborne diseases: bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever vectorborne diseases: malaria and yellow fever water contact disease: schistosomiasis aerosolized dust or soil contact disease: Lassa fever (2009) HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate 1.7 %; 55,000 people living with HIV/AIDS; 3,300 people died (2007 est.)
GOVERNMENT	
Type	constitutional democracy
Independence	27 April 1961 (from the UK)
Constitution	1 October 1991; amended several times
Legal System	based on English law and customary laws indigenous to local tribes; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction
ECONOMY	
Agricultural Products	rice, coffee, cocoa, palm kernels, palm oil, peanuts; poultry, cattle, sheep, pigs; fish
Industries	diamond mining; small-scale manufacturing (beverages, textiles, cigarettes, footwear); petroleum refining, small commercial ship repair
Import commodities	foodstuffs, machinery and equipment, fuels and lubricants, chemicals
Import Partners	South Africa 14.61%, China 7.58%, US 5.87%, Cote d'Ivoire 5.65%, India 5.19%, Malaysia 5.19%, France 5.08%, UK 4.48%, Netherlands 4.06% (2009)
Export Commodities	diamonds, rutile, cocoa, coffee, fish
Export Partners	Belgium 26.56%, US 11.87%, Netherlands 7.91%, UK 7.4%, India 6.67%, Cote d'Ivoire 6.13%, Greece 4.05% (2009)

Per Capita GDP	\$900 (2010 est.)
Population below poverty line	70.2% (2004)

*CITATIONS: All information included above is extracted from the CIA World Factbook except where noted.